

THE PRELUDE

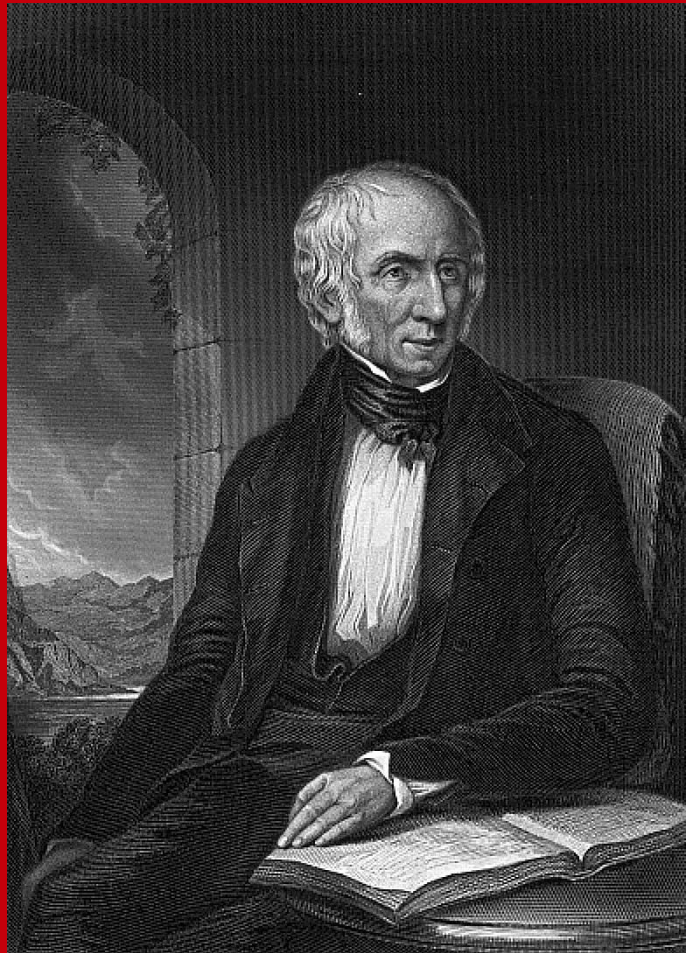
Or, I GET SMARTER:

A POEM ABOUT ME

by William Wordsworth

VOLUME II

Of Fourteen



as Translated Into

Even-More-Boring-And-Trite by

Fast Sedan Nellson,

MOST MAGNIFICENT TRANSLATOR IN THE WESTERN WORLD!!

THE SECOND PART

ABOUT SCHOOL (*even more of it*)

So far, Mate, though there's a lot we've
Left out, I've tried to talk about
How boring things were as a kid;
Especially the things that made me really like
Water and trees and grass. I'd barely
Started to like it, and depended on
Getting to see it at random times; because
Things were constantly
Crazy. We usually played
Later in the summer until it got dark;
There was no chair outside; nobody
Sat on the bench or stairs; the farmer
Was asleep, and the old bloke who stayed
Up late too; but the fun
Kept coming and was noisy: finally,
When it was really dark, and there were stars
And clouds, we went home and to bed,
Really tired and thinking hard.
Oi! Is there anyone who was a kid,
And didn't need to be told to shut up
When he knows he's amazingly smart?
Is there anyone, even the smartest and greatest
Person ever, who doesn't wish sometimes
For impossible Union¹; - who wouldn't,
If he could, give Duty and Truth²
All of his baby love?
A boring spirit is on
My body, because it's been so
Long since that time
I remember really well,
That, remembering, lots of times I feel
Like I'm really two people, me

¹ I have been unable to make sense out this phrase. Translation: the Union that cannot be.

² According to convention, Wordsworth ought to have capitalized these words, since he's rambling about them as if they were people, or else platonic-ish Ideas. Apparently he forgot.

And some other Being³. A
Rock, right in the middle of our town
Square, was the goal
Or in the middle of these sports;⁴ and when I
Got back after awhile, I went there,
The rock was gone, and instead
A nice Assembly Room ⁵was in the place
We liked. Play loud music,
And have fun! But hey, Blokes! I'll bet
A couple of you remember
Nice nights, and the old Lady
We named the rock after, who used to sit on it,⁶
And sold worthless crap
Constantly, for sixty years.

We had fun; the year was
Top-notch. But I got to the age
When I calmed
Down, when the pretty things
In Nature were tagged on
To all my holiday fun
And sport, otherwise it sucked
And was boring.

In summer,

What we'd do was, on sunny days off school,
To race on Lake Windermere
In boats; where we went
Sometimes was an island with lots of birds
Singing constantly; sometimes a different one
with trees, and
Flowers like it was a field;
And sometimes a third island, that had
An old useless church
That used to be holy⁷, and where

3 This time he remembered to capitalise it. Rah!

4 Which sports? The ones he mentioned in line 9.

5 i.e., a place where rich people could go to hang out, even if they were women.

6 The rock, that is. I mean to say, the lady sat on the rock; not vice-versa. (I presume; Wordsworth's syntax is ambiguous.)

7 Original reads, 'once to Our Lady dedicate,' which could alternately mean that it was called St. Mary's.

Singing happened constantly. In a race
Ending like that, there was never any boredom,
Nervousness, or sadness, or jealousy:
We slept under trees, all happy,
Loser and winner. So pride about being strong,
And bragging about being the best,
Didn't happen as much; so slowly we made
Our hearts really independent⁸ but humble;
And if you're my friend, I can say,
'Cause you know it, that ever since then
I've been really really modest,
And I really like, it maybe too much,
When I'm alone.⁹

Dinner was puny, like the Sabines'¹⁰
We knew more than we wanted to how great
Being hungry is--because our health
Wasn't poncey;¹¹ because, except for
Our allowance, for three terms¹² of the year
We were really poor. But now we got back
To school from holiday,
And we were practically loaded, enough
To buy posh sweets pricier than that old woman
With the rock I mentioned, with her crap, sold.
So we ate crappy food on the ground,
Or under trees, or next to the stream
Or next to the fountain, with leaves
And wind, and the sun
Didn't bother us because we were happy.
And I'm not just rambling when I talk about
How sometimes, in between holidays,
We spent lots of money;--to rent
A horse;

8 Wordsworth does not inform us what his heart is 'independent' *from*. Apparently it's not that important.

9 Did Wordsworth talk this much to *himself* then?

10 The Sabines didn't eat much either, apparently. Then later, many of the were raped by the Romans.

11 It is a matter of some debate among Anti-Wordsworth scholars whether this is intended as a joke. It is the translator's modest opinion that it is not, since no reliable evidence has yet been produced that Wordsworth had (even a defective or residual) sense of humour.

12 School terms, that is. Wordsworth is talking about school, if you remember.

And with the suspicious innkeeper, whose horse
It was, sometimes we would
Lie, if we were going
Far away: some stone circle
Where the Druids prayed, or the old walls
Of that big church, where in a clump
Of plants, named after St. Mary,
There's still a crappy pile with a broken arch,
Belfry, and pictures, and trees,
It was great! Our horses ate
The grass. It was calmer than inland,¹³ and
Because the wind from the ocean
Passes overhead, trees and ruins
Are there,¹⁴
And none of them make noise or moves;
That valley is so deep, and it's so
Great to rest and be quiet in.

After we got on our horses,
We rode them real fast through the church
In a race, and left the stone
Statues, and that one bird
That sang so so pretty one day in the
Old church, that- though the rain had
Made the ground wet, and, from a slight
Breeze, like the church was crying, the ivy on
The walls dripped water- even though
It was crappy out the bird I couldn't see sang
Really pretty, that¹⁵ I could have
Lived there, forever
To hear it. We rode real fast through the church
And into the valley, and, riding in circles
For no reason, in whatever landscape was there
We went home. Crikey, you rocks and streams,
And the calmness of evening!
Even in these times¹⁶ sometimes I felt

13 This is near the ocean, apparently.

14 Yes, this whole line can essentially be reduced to this.

15 The poor grammar in this sentence corresponds to the original.

16 'even in these times' from the original; it is syntactically unclear what times Wordsworth has in mind, an ambiguity exacerbated by the fact that he seems to have felt the rocks etc. at

You there, when we slowed down
Next to hills, or when
The moon and the ocean were there while
We rode home.

Halfway up the hill,
Near the bay,
There was a tavern; no crappy house,
All old like the other ones,
But great, with a door that was
Fancy, and grooms, and stables, and inside
Bottles, glasses, and red wine.
In the olden times, before they built the Hall¹⁷
On this big island, this tavern deserved to
Have a poet love it more, a shit-hole
With one fireplace and nice trees outside.
But- even though the words over the door
Were gone, and big gold letters,
All across the sign, were painted over
A old lion, making
Fun of the crappy painter who made it-
Still, right now, I really like that place
Even though it's pompous. The garden was
Was on a hill with a bowling green¹⁸
On top; at the bottom there were
Some trees, and they were wet; and we had
Lots of snacks, strawberries, and cream.
There, while we played all day
At bowls, whether we were good
Or not, we laughed
Really loud. But, before night,
When we went back late in our boat
While it was dark, and went toward
The beach of a little island with one of us,
The Minstrel, and marooned him,
And left really quietly, while he played flute

virtually *all* times.

¹⁷ It's unclear what hall Wordsworth is referring to. Also, we're on an island, apparently.

¹⁸ A sporting-field that is, not the town in North-western Ohio or elsewhere.

On a rock¹⁹--crikey, then, the really
Really calm water was in my thoughts
Kind of sad but happy, and the sky,
Prettier than ever, made me really
Emotional, like a dream!
So I got more easily amused, so
Boring things
Were really great for me: I already started to
Love the sun; as a boy I loved the sun,
But less than now, 'cause it keeps
Us alive, and when
We see it we're sure we're alive;
Not because it's so great for everyone-
But because of this, that I saw him be
Pretty and with hills, and saw
A mountain with the sun behind it,
Lots of times, when, from too much
Being happy, my blood seemed to be
Having fun, and I breathed and was happy.
And, likewise, boring but great,
Like nation-love and sex-love
But not the same,²⁰ I loved the moon;
Because I could forget to care about stuff
When I looked at it in
The sky, like it didn't
Know where else to go, but belonged to you,²¹
Aye, attached by some special rule
To you and the houses in you, you great Valley!

These random things I liked
About nature, I liked less
Every day, and I'm in a hurry to say
How Nature, which'd been irrelevant to me

19 There is no clue who this 'Minstrel of the Troop' is; it could be interpreted and translated variously as 'singer,' or as a racially-offensive musician-comedian, or as 'idiot' or 'git'. In any event, this brief and incomprehensible tale is one of the most exciting passages of the entire *Prelude*.

20 I have struggled to render the confusing nature of this passage from the original to Even-More-Boring-and-Trite.

21 No not you, don't get excited. Wordsworth's forgotten that you're here and now he's talking to the valley.

And not too important,²² I started to go be in
Just for fun. But who wants to think about
His thinking like it was maths,
Split up like land by the government?²³
Who knows exactly when
He started doing something, or even before it?
Who would point like he had a stick and say
“This part of my mind that's like a river
Came from that spigot? You, mate! are
Better at knowing about your thoughts; you
Know what science really is,
Not something great,
But a dummy²⁴, that keeps
Us sick. You're no posh sell-out
To that stupid idea that we should
Be detailed about what we mean, then
Think that what we call things is
What they are, not how we see them.²⁵
To you, who aren't fooled by that stuff,
Everything looks alike,
And you won't be sure, with me less qualified
Than lots of people to talk about psychology
And how it works, say what different
Thoughts were, and being really wordy
Talk about each one's life story
As if it were a single thing.²⁶
It's hard, impossible, to think about thinking,
If every single thought,
Not in a new-age lazy way,

22 Though you'd never know it from the last 850 lines...

23 Who indeed.

24 In the original, the latinate medical term 'succedaneum', i.e. 'substitute' in standard English. Such as: “*The Prelude* is a **succedaneum** to bringing about a literature which, in Wordsworth's words, the writer “is selecting from the real language of men.”

25 The current passage poses particular problems for the translator, for the passage in Wordsworth's original is already a (rather forced) translation from the original standard English. The argument, which seems to have been conceived in the language of Psychology, is by its nature resistant to Wordsworth's Boring-and-Trite language. In retrospect, a prose essay *might* have been a more effective form for polemics concerning the structure and functional prerogatives of the human mind, than was pseudo-agrarian iambic pentameter verse. Live and learn, right, Wordsworth?

26 This sentence is incomplete and has no object in the original; what the reader 'will doubt' is never gotten around to.

But after actually thinking about it,
Doesn't have a start.

Babies²⁷ are lucky,
(Because I want to make my best guess about
How we grow up,) Babies are lucky,
Whose Mums hold them up, so they can sleep
Between their knockers; who use their souls²⁸
To know how happy their Mums are!
For them, in one Person, there's
Something really great that spreads and makes
Things great by combining all the senses;
He's no lonely guy, confused and sad:
His baby-arteries are filled with
The heaviness and love
Of nature that make him be here.²⁹
Is there a flower, that he points to
But is too puny to pick up, already love
From Love's purest place³⁰
Has made the flower pretty; there's already
Pity that he has because he's really gentle
And shows it to stuff that seems
Like it got beat up at some point.
A Being like this³¹ lives really deeply,
Because he's really puny, stupid as he is weak,
A prisoner of this world where stuff happens:
Because, feeling³² has given him the power
To have his senses which are getting better
And like an Angel
Make stuff³³, both the maker and the stuff,
Only doing what goes along with

27 In the singular in the original throughout this strophe; but Wordsworth addresses an Ideal Abstracted 'Babe' which stands for all of them. I have met him half-way by retaining the capitalization.

28 This turn of phrase seems peculiar, but upon close grammatical inspection, this seems, by process of elimination, to be the only legitimate scan of this clause.

29 Despite the translator's greatest efforts, it is impossible to convey the exquisite banality with which lines 242-244 are rendered in the original.

30 i.e., Wordsworth's Mom.

31 i.e., a baby.

32 It is unfortunate that Wordsworth does not define what precisely he *means* by 'feeling', since upon it depends the significance of this entire discourse, which shows signs of having been previously translated from Philosophy to Boring-and-Trite.

33 specifically, the lad's psychology.

What it already sees. - That's honestly the first
Ghost of poetry in our real life,
Which by growing up and having jobs,
For most people, goes away; for others,
Even though they get old and start to rot,
It's like that until they croak it.

Since I was a kid,
Starting soon after that first time
That, and remember I was a Baby, by touching
Mom I read her emotions,
I've tried to show how
That baby-feeling,
Which is really great, in me
Never went away. But it's going to be
Even harder; I'm scared
To do it we'll need
Goat-muscles, and eagle-wings:³⁴
Because now I'm worried
And don't know why. I was left alone³⁵
Looking for things I could see, and didn't know why.
The props holding up my house of feelings fell,
But the house stood, like it was held up
By its soul! Everything I saw
Was really great, so the better parts of
My brain could talk to each other
Better. We have lots of fun
When we're kids, but by Jove! It's so great to live
When all the time you're getting
Smarter, and being smart is always fun,
And you're never sad! The seasons happened,
And every season everywhere I went
There was stuff changing,
Which, if it weren't for love which pays attention,
I wouldn't have noticed; it was a memory
That really happened, that no one else knew about.
That's like life, and change, and beauty, being alone
Which is always better than the "jet-set"--
Company as great as being alone

³⁴ For an instant this sounds like it's going to be a Byron poem... no such luck, however.

³⁵ It is unclear when; in fact much remains unclear about this passage.

By being quiet in the same place,
And little things you think about
From noticing lots of little differences, differences
Between things that, if you don't pay attention,
Are the same thing, so, from that one thing,
More greatness; because I walked around alone,
At night when it's quiet, and while I did it
I thought that sounds
Seemed louder, without crappy
Sight; and I stood,
If there was a storm coming,
Under a rock, and listened to the sounds
That are the earth-ghost's language,
Or live in the wind.
That's how I became a visionary;
And don't think i was wasting my time by feeling
Great: here's why,³⁶
Because they're like the good part of our brains
And how we think; except the soul,³⁷
Who remembers how she felt, but forgets
What she felt, has a dim notion
That things can be great, which
She tries to reach by getting smarter, always feeling
Like no matter how smart, there's always
More to go.

And not just that,
Through the thunderstorm, but also in nice
Weather, that greatness
And perfectness of the natural way
Everything is, which makes the brain
Really happy, came
To me even greater with a super-duper soul,
Even more awesome than it³⁸ was. My morning walks
Were in the morning;-Often before school
I walked around our lake, five miles
Of nice walking, it sure was great! Because of it

³⁶ The referential status in the sentence of Wordsworth's phrase 'not for this' is unclear; this is the translator's best guess.

³⁷ The soul is female at the moment, apparently.

³⁸ 'it' meaning the 'greatness' ('universal power' in the original Boring-and-Trite).

I liked more that guy that went with me, a Friend,
I liked a lot then; he'd be really emotional
If he read my poem!³⁹ Because it's been a long time
Since we hung out, and, without
Anything in common, now
We act like we never knew each other.
A lot of the time I went outside
Lots earlier, before anyone lit their
Fireplaces, or the bird, on a tree,
Made his noises, and sat
On a rock alone,
In the morning, when the valley
Was empty.
How will I look for the beginning? Where can I get
To believe in the awesome stuff I felt back then?
Often at those times a really important calmness
Was inside me, so I forgot to pay attention
To stuff, and when I saw stuff it
Seemed like it was in my head, or I dreamed it,
Made it up.

It would take a really long time to talk
About what spring and fall, and winter and snow,
And summer and shade, and day and night,
Evening and morning, sleep and being awake, and
Thoughts from nowhere, gave me
To make me really love Nature
Like it was God. But just
Don't forget, I still had
The creativity from being a kid;
And by the boringness of the world
My soul was really strong. A power to change
Was inside me; a hand that made me, sometimes
Rebellious, acting pretty naughty;
A separate spirit, that fought
With everything else, but mostly
Doing whatever other stuff told it to,
Which it talked with.⁴⁰ An extra light

39 No doubt he would. The original of this sentence is an example of particularly admirable syntactic nonsense and superfluous commas.

40 An accurate description of 'rebelliousness' as Wordsworth, the sometime Poet-Laureate,

Came from my brain, which was as pretty
As a sunset; the noisy birds,
The wind, fountains that run
And make noise, obeyed
Something that was like it,⁴¹ and the storm at midnight
Got darker when I looked at it:
That's why I worshipped it, and liked it a lot,
And thought it was great.

And we have to
Write this down, that I still loved
Exercise and work,
Than thinking I
Thought funner, and which I say
Is more poetic⁴² because it's more like
Making stuff. The song⁴³ would talk
About that really big building made
By seeing what's the same
About things that aren't the same
To dumb people. I was seventeen
And, maybe because of this habit that
Was real deep, or from too much
Really liking everything
Making everything like each other,
I even gave dead stuff
My fun; or the power of truth
Telling me it was there, talked
To stuff that actually existed; I, now,

embodied it.

41 That is, something that was like the light that came from Wordsworth's brain.

42 This impressively ludicrous grammar is a perfect example of what Wordsworth calls, "the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers". It reads in the original Boring-and-Trite:

*"...that I still loved
The exercise and produce of a toil,
Than analytic industry to me
More pleasing, and whose character I deem
Is more poetic..."*

It is satisfying to juxtapose this passage from Wordsworth's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*:
"The principal object, then, proposed in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them in a selection of language really used by men".

43 What song? Perhaps the one that Wordsworth is currently writing down.

Saw really great stuff all over the place.⁴⁴
So while time passed, lots of it,
From Nature's soul,
I got so much, that all my thoughts
Were emotional; then I was only
Happy, when with super happiness
I felt the feeling of Being spread all
Over everything whether it moves or not;
Over everything that, though we can't think about
Or know about, human's can't
Even see it, but it lives in the heart;
Over everything that walks, or makes noise,
Or flies; over everything that swims
Underwater, yeah, even on the water,
And really deep underwater. Don't be surprised
That I was really happy, really really happy,
Talking like this in the world and sky
With each kind of animal,⁴⁵ while it looked
At the Uncreated with a face
Of caring, and a loving expression.
They sang one song, and you could hear it,
Hear it best, then, when the real-life ear,
Shut off by the start of that song,⁴⁶
Stopped working.

If I'm wrong, and some other religion
Makes more sense,
Still I wouldn't have any of
The feelings that make everything
So great, if I wasn't thankful
When I talked about you, mountains and lakes
And noisy waterfalls, you mist and wind
That live where I used to.
If I was really pure when I was a kid,
And, when I'm running errands, I'm content

44 My translation into Even-More-Boring-and-Trite has lost the slightly less-boring simile, "like a sea". The image was by 1805 such a hackneyed commonplace as to barely count as figurative language, hence bringing the Boring-and-Trite original already quite close to Even-More-Boring-and-Trite.

45 Young Wordsworth was a regular Dr. Doolittle.

46 i.e., the animal-song that only Wordsworth is cool enough to hear.

With only being somewhat bored, and talk
To God and Nature, and don't
Bear grudges or want naughty things--
You gave me that;⁴⁷ if in this scary time,
When everything's sad and I've given up,
If, with everyone really lazy,
And evil happiness when people I like
Get picked on, we didn't know how,
To selfishness, but called nice names
Like peace and quiet and married life
Yet willingly joined in making fun of
Really smart blokes;⁴⁸ if, in the time
Of dodginess, I still
Think we're good at heart, and am
Even more cocky than the Romans, sure
Of it no matter what, even when I'm sad,
The best thing in my life--you gave it to me,
You mountains! Yours, Oh Nature! You gave me
My really smart thoughts; and in you,
For my worried heart, I get
Lots of really great happiness for ever and ever
And also pure emotions.

You, mate! grew up

In the city, which was different;
But, in different ways, we came
To the same conclusion.⁴⁹ And that's why
I talk to you, and don't care about people hating it,
Their snide poncey giggles,
And the kind of body language that usually
Makes people's faces
Really ugly. Because you've looked for
The truth in being alone, and, since the time
You were able, finally,
To really love Nature,⁵⁰ you have

47 So it's God's and Nature's fault...

48 This clause, from lines 437-440 ("if, with everyone...smart blokes", is grammatically incorrect and incomplete in the original Again, when Wordsworth ventures out of Boring-and-Trite and to attempt more complex dialects, he often gets tripped up.

49 If you were not raised in the city, please, for decency's sake, put this book down. You peeping tom.

50 It is unclear why you were unable to love Nature ("to serve in Nature's temple" in the original Boring-and-Trite, but 'worship' in Wordsworth's case seems to have consisted of

Really loved her⁵¹ a whole lot;
You're like me in lots of ways,⁵² but especially
In how we both love Nature.

I'm off, mate!

Take
Care!⁵³ Hang out with people a lot,
And even more often stay in,
Do what you feel like, so maybe you'll live
For a long time, and be a really great bloke.

little other than meandering around the hills and talking about it being great.

⁵¹ Nature, that is.

⁵² oh, dear.

⁵³ Wordsworth takes more than an entire line to convey this, in an admirable string of banalities.

THE PRELUDE

of William Wordsworth, as
Translated into EVEN-MORE-BORING-&-TRITE
BY FAST SEDAN NELLSON, ESQ.
Translator Extraordinaire!

"Mr. F.S. Nellson can make horse-nuggets out of literary horsesh--t!"

-Erasmus Stubbs, Vice-Editor of the *Edinburgh Examiner & Review*.

* * *

"We learn from Horace, "Homer sometimes **sleeps**;"
We feel without him,--Wordsworth **sometimes** wakes,--
To show with what **complacency** he creeps,
With his dear 'Waggoners,' around his lakes.
He wishes for "a boat" to sail the deeps--
Of Ocean?--No, of air; and then he makes
Another outcry for "a little boat,"
And **drivels** seas to set it well afloat."

-The Right Honourable George Gordon, Lord Byron of Newstead Abbey.

* * *

"Master Nellson's translation is so **frightfully** true to life, I do declare
that it is as if Mr. Wordsworth were here himself, in the very **flesh**;
only much less **unpleasant**, and one does not fall **asleep** so quickly."

-Lady Wilhelmina Sutton-Smythe, Marchioness of Eastern Surrey.

* * *

"To Wordsworth...
In honoured **poverty** thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and **liberty**,--
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst **cease to be**."

-Percy Shelley, Atheist.

* * *

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